

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 00-58

August 25, 2000

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CALIFORNIA PUBLIC ADOPTION AGENCIES
ALL CALIFORNIA GROUP HOMES
ALL CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- ☐ State Law Change
- ☐ Federal Law or Regulation Change
- ☐ Court Order
- ☐ Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- ☒ Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: California State Ombudsman for Foster Care

This All-County Letter (ACL) provides information regarding the Office of the California State Ombudsman for Foster Care established as part of the implementation of Senate Bill 933 (Chapter 311, Statutes of 1998).

SB 933 added Chapter 2.5, Section 16160 through Section 16167, to the Welfare and Institutions Code. These sections establish the State Ombudsman for Foster Care Program within the California Department of Social Services. We are pleased to announce the opening of the Office of the Ombudsman for Foster Care, both in Sacramento and Los Angeles, and the establishment of a toll-free telephone line, 877-846-1602, to receive concerns regarding issues affecting foster youth.

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16167 requires county social workers to provide foster children with the toll-free number for the Office and verbal or written information regarding the existence and purpose of the Office. To assist counties in providing this information, enclosed are camera-ready copies of flyers and a copy of our brochures, one in English and one in Spanish, for distribution by county agencies to all foster youth and other concerned parties. Please contact us if you would like this material via e-mail or disk in order to reproduce these materials in color.

The Office of the State Ombudsman for Foster Care is mandated to perform three main functions:

- 1) Disseminate information on the rights of children and youth in foster care and the services provided by the Office. The information shall include notification that conversations with the Ombudsman may not be confidential, and that all reports of child abuse will be reported.

- 2) Investigate and attempt to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of children placed in foster care, related to their care, placement and services. All fact-finding inquiries will be conducted in a neutral and objective manner.
- 3) Compile and make available to the Legislature all data collected over the course of the year including, but not limited to, the number of contacts to the toll-free telephone number, the number of complaints made, the number of investigations performed by the Office, the number of referrals made, and the number of unresolved complaints.

The Ombudsman and staff are authorized to:

- Meet or communicate with any foster child in his or her placement or elsewhere.
- Access any record of a state or local agency that is necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the Office.
- Investigate any and all complaints received by the Office, and decide whether to investigate a complaint further or refer the complaint to another agency.
- Report all findings to the California Department of Social Services and to the Legislature.

The authority of the Ombudsman Program is limited as follows:

- The Ombudsman does not have the authority to challenge court decisions.
- The Ombudsman can recommend case reassessments but is not empowered to change case plans.
- The Ombudsman does not have any authority regarding personnel issues. Complaints regarding discrimination shall be referred to the appropriate Civil Rights Office.

Given the nature of the Ombudsman Program, every attempt will be made to resolve complaints voluntarily and informally. When complaints are outside the authority of the Ombudsman, appropriate referrals will be made.

The Ombudsman Program has hosted two meetings of the statewide Advisory Committee of the Ombudsman for Foster Care. This committee includes representatives from county child welfare agencies, members of the judiciary, child and youth advocates, foster youth, foster family agencies, care providers, the California Department of Social Services and other groups interested in the care and services provided to foster children and youth. The committee has assisted the Ombudsman staff in the development of protocols and procedures and has provided input concerning the development of brochures, a database and related issues.

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The Ombudsman staff look forward to working with you and other agencies, advocacy groups, care providers and individuals committed to the well being of California's foster children and youth. If you have further questions contact: Karen Grace-Kaho, California State Ombudsman for Foster Care, (916) 263-3547.

Sincerely,

SYLVIA PIZZINI, Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Divison

Enclosures

FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

1-877-846-1602



- The Foster Care Ombudsman is here to help you!
- We can help with any problem or concern you have with your services or your treatment in foster care.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA * HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY * DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Gray Davis, Governor Grantland Johnson, Secretary Rita Saenz, Director

California State Department of Social Services
Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman
744 P Street M/S 19-25, Sacramento CA 95814

FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

1-877-846-1602



- Do you have concerns with your care or services in foster care?
- Call toll- free. The Foster Care Ombudsman is here for you, and can help you!

California State Department of Social Services
Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman
744 P Street M/S 19-25, Sacramento CA 95814



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FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

1-877-846-1602



If you are a foster youth with concerns about your care, treatment or services, we can help!

The call is free!

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IF YOU NEED HELP OR HAVE QUESTIONS CALL THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN



TOLL FREE 1-877-846-1602

Foster Youth Have Rights!

As a foster youth, you have the right to:

- **Live in a safe, healthy and comfortable home where you are treated with respect.**
- **Be free from physical, sexual or mental abuse by anyone.**
- **Be given adequate and healthy food, adequate clothing, and receive medical and dental care.**
- **Keep your own money and have your own bank account (unless prohibited by your case plan).**
- **Make and receive confidential phone calls and send and receive unopened mail (unless prohibited by court order).**
- **Receive and attend Independent Living Skills Programs if you are 16 or older.**
- **To attend your court hearing and speak to the judge.**
- **Visit and have contact with your brothers and sisters (unless prohibited by court order).**
- **Contact your social worker, probation officer, attorney or CASA at any time.**
- **See your social worker or probation officer once a month.**
- **Attend school and religious services and activities of your choice.**
- **Complain to Community Care Licensing or the Foster Care Ombudsman if you feel any of your rights have been violated or ignored, and to be free from threats or punishment for making complaints.**

Know your rights! For a complete list of foster youths' rights, call the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman at 1-877-846-1602 and we will send you a copy of the Youth Law Center's Legal Rights of Teens in Out of Home Care.

California State Department of Social Services, Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman- 744 P Street, M/S 19-25, Sacramento, CA 95814



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Gray Davis, Governor Grantland Johnson, Secretary Rita Saenz, Director



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Gray Davis, Governor

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Grantland Johnson, Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Rita Saenz, Director



CONTACT:

**California State Office of the
Ombudsman for Foster Care
CDSS**

**744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814**



Call: 877 846-1602

FAX: (916) 263-3367

PUB 339 (4/00)

California State Office of the
OMBUDSMAN
for FOSTER CARE
744 P Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814

California State

Office
of the

OMBUDSMAN

for

**FOSTER
CARE**



An independent resource for
reviewing issues concerning
foster care youth

THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

- ✓ The Foster Care Ombudsman's Office is empowered to investigate complaints about state and local agencies regarding foster care.
- ✓ The Office has dedicated, caring staff in both Sacramento and Los Angeles to help address your concerns.
- ✓ The California Legislature directed that a Foster Care Ombudsman's Office be established to provide an independent forum for review and resolution of concerns related to the care, placement or services provided to children and youth placed in foster care.
- ✓ The Foster Care Ombudsman Office is an autonomous entity with the California Department of Social Services.

"Ombudsman" is a Swedish term of long and honorable tradition. Ombudsmen help people resolve their difference with public officials.



CONCERNED?

Are you concerned about the care, treatment or services provided to children and youth receiving foster care services?

CALL THE FOSTER CARE HELP LINE

877-846-1602

TOLL FREE

FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN

- ✓ Listens to your concerns
- ✓ Documents your complaints
- ✓ Gathers all relevant information
- ✓ Remains neutral and impartial
- ✓ Formulates a process for possible resolution and makes recommendations
- ✓ Gives feedback on actions and recommendations to every complainant.

It is the policy of this Office to maintain confidentiality of the information provided to the extent possible. Exceptions to this policy will be discussed with complainants and callers will be informed that all reports of child abuse or neglect must be reported by law.





STATE OF CALIFORNIA (ESTADO DE CALIFORNIA)

Gray Davis, Gobernador

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
(SECRETARIA DE SALUD Y SERVICIOS HUMANOS)**

Grantland Johnson, Secretario

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
(DEPARTAMENTO DE SERVICIOS SOCIALES)**

Rita Sáenz, Directora



Comuníquese con:

**La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector
de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el
Cuidado de Crianza Temporal del Estado de
California a la siguiente dirección:**

**California State Office of
the Ombudsman for**

Foster Care

CDSS

744 P Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Teléfono: 877 846-1602

FAX: (916) 263-3367



California State Office of the
OMBUDSMAN
for FOSTER CARE
744 P Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814

Estado de California

Oficina del
OFICIAL MEDIADOR Y
PROTECTOR DE LOS
DERECHOS DE LAS
PERSONAS

bajo

el cuidado de
crianza
temporal



Un recurso
independiente para
revisar los asuntos relacionados a
la juventud bajo el cuidado de
crianza temporal

PROGRAMA del oficial mediador y protector de los derechos de las personas bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal

- ✓ La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal está encargada de investigar las quejas en contra de oficinas estatales y locales en relación al cuidado de crianza temporal.
- ✓ En ambas oficinas, la de Sacramento y la de Los Angeles, hay personal dedicado e interesado en atender a sus preocupaciones.
- ✓ La Legislatura de California ordenó que se estableciera la Oficina del Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal para proporcionar un foro independiente para revisar y solucionar preocupaciones en relación al cuidado, colocación o servicios proporcionados a los niños y a la juventud que se encuentran bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal.
- ✓ La Oficina del Oficial Mediador y Protector de los Derechos de las Personas bajo el Cuidado de Crianza Temporal es una entidad autónoma en el Departamento de Servicios Sociales de California.

El término en inglés "Ombudsman" (oficial mediador y protector de los derechos) es un término sueco de una larga y honorable tradición. Estas personas ayudan a la gente a resolver sus diferencias con oficiales públicos.



¿est a preocupado?

¿Está usted preocupado acerca del cuidado, tratamiento o servicios que se les proporcionan a los niños y a la juventud que reciben cuidado de crianza temporal?

llame a
la línea de ayuda
en relación al
cuidado de crianza
temporal

877-846-1602

LLAMADA GRATUITA

el oficial mediador y protector de los derechos de las personas bajo el cuidado de crianza temporal

- ✓ escucha sus preocupaciones
- ✓ prepara documentación sobre sus quejas
- ✓ reúne toda la información pertinente
- ✓ se mantiene neutral e imparcial
- ✓ crea un proceso para la posible resolución y presenta recomendaciones
- ✓ proporciona a cada una de las personas que presenten una queja información sobre las acciones y sus recomendaciones.

La política de la Oficina es mantener, lo más posible, la confidencialidad sobre la información que se proporciona. Las excepciones a esta política se discutirán con las personas que presenten las quejas y a las personas que llamen se les informará que la ley estipula que todos los casos de abuso o descuido de niños se tienen que reportar.

